



### Provide a Conditional Scholarship for Future Bilingual Teachers

#### Background

Washington State has seen a dramatic increase over the past few years in the number and percent of students who need instruction in a language besides English. Currently, Limited-English-Proficient (LEP) students, also known as Dominant-In-Another-Language (DIAL) students, constitute some 7.5% of the total student population (of which some 62% speak Spanish).

Each year, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) releases a report to the Legislature on the progress of LEP education, entitled "Educating Limited-English-Proficient Students in Washington State." Information drawn from the most recently released report (issued January 2002) shows that there is a dramatic and immediate need for qualified bilingual educators: "Although research has found that students perform better when provided more intensive instruction in their primary language, few students receive this type of instruction. One reason for this is the shortage of qualified teachers. Most instruction for LEP students in Washington is provided by instructional aides, typically in a classroom setting with some ESL instruction. Less than half the teachers in the [transitional bilingual] program have an endorsement in teaching either ESL or bilingual education." (OSPI, 7) In fact, seventy-four percent of DIAL students receive "little or no instruction in their primary language, according to district reports." (OSPI, 11) National studies show (and OSPI concurs) that this results in "lower levels of academic performance in math and reading, higher rates of grade retention, and much higher dropout rates." (OSPI, 4) "Many districts report difficulties recruiting teachers qualified to teach students with limited English proficiency." (OSPI, 8) Districts have had to turn to under-qualified aides to supplement instruction: according to OSPI, of the 2,680 staff providing instruction, 1,827 were instructional aides, more than double the number of teachers (853). (OSPI, 9)

#### Bilingual Teachers Encourage Cultural Identity, Parent Participation and Act as Role Models

The Washington State Legislature has determined, according to WAC 162-28-040, that steps taken to improve DIAL students' English ability, "shall build competency in the English language without detriment to the children's skills in other languages and without impairing or suppressing the children's cultural identity and heritage." Bilingual teachers are an effective way of achieving this. These teachers also serve as valuable role models for students. All three are crucial aspects of increasing student achievement and lowering dropout rates.

#### Qualified Bilingual Teachers are More Effective and Cost Efficient

Qualified, bilingual teachers provide better instruction. This results in better student learning and performance, which allows them to leave special, more costly bilingual instruction programs sooner. The Commission believes that this measure is the best possible solution because it will provide deserving students with the financial opportunity to study; and, will ensure that the state has the qualified teachers needed so badly by its schools.

#### Demand for Bilingual Instructors Under-represented in Supply and Demand Report

The OSPI report "Educator Supply and Demand" (July 2002) separates ESL and Bilingual programs. This results in what could be regarded as an under-representation of the over-all need for bilingual teachers. By separating the two, they were each viewed individually as a "slight shortage" and received less attention than as a "considerable shortage" together.

#### Districts Forced to Look Abroad for Teachers

The demand for qualified teachers is so great that some districts have begun to look to other countries for teachers. For example, the Yakima School District was forced to import eight bilingual teachers from abroad last year – three from Spain and five from Mexico. The district should have been able to fill these positions with someone from Washington, but there were no qualified teachers available.

*The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Latino community of the State. The Commission meets with members of the Latino community six times a year throughout the state to gather information as to their concerns.*

#### Relevant Bill:

**HB 1763**

#### Primary Sponsor:

**Rep. Berkey**

"Less than half the teachers in the program have an endorsement in teaching either ESL or bilingual education." -OSPI

"Many districts report difficulties recruiting teachers qualified to teach students with limited English proficiency." -OSPI

This measure will improve parental participation by providing more bilingual staff to schools in great need.

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